



City of Santa Barbara  
Building & Safety Division  
**Residential Handrail & Guard  
Requirements**

Community Development  
630 Garden Street  
805-564-5485

The following requirements are for handrails and guards in residential occupancies that serve only one dwelling unit. Some of these requirements do not apply to multi-family and commercial occupancies.

**Handrails:** §1012, 2007 CBC

Residential stairways with 4 or more risers are required to have a continuous handrail the full length of the stairs. The top of handrails shall not be placed less than 34 inches nor more than 38 inches above the nosing of the treads. Handrails shall be continuous except at landings where a newel post may interrupt; or at the lowest tread a volute, turnout or starting ease is permissible. Ends shall be returned to walls, guards or the walking surface or be continuous into an adjacent rail. The handgrip portion of handrails shall not be less than 1 ¼ inches nor more than 2 inches in cross-sectional dimension or the shape shall provide an equivalent gripping surface. If the handrail is not circular, it shall have a perimeter dimension of at least 4 inches and not greater than 6 ¼ inches with a maximum cross section dimension of 2 ¼ inches. Handrail edges shall have a minimum radius of .01 inches. Brackets or balusters attached to the bottom of handrails shall not project horizontally beyond the sides of the handrails within 1 ½ inches of the bottom of the rail. Handrails projecting from a wall shall have a space of not less than 1 ½ inches between the wall and handrail. Each handrail may project into the required stairway width a distance of 4 ½ inches from each side of a stairway. The mounting of handrails shall be such that the completed handrail and supporting structure are capable of withstanding a load of at least 200 pounds applied in any direction at any point on the rail.

**Guards:** §1013, 2007 CBC

Guards shall be located along open-sided walking surfaces, mezzanines, industrial equipment platforms, stairways, ramps, and landings that are located more than 30 inches above the floor or grade below. The top of guardrails shall not be less than 42 inches in height. When within individual dwelling units of R-2 occupancies or R-3 occupancies, guards whose top rail serves as a handrail, shall have a height not less than 34 inches and not more than 38 inches. On interior R-2 or R-3 stairways, open guardrails shall have intermediate rails or an ornamental pattern such that a sphere 4 3/8 inches in diameter cannot pass through. The triangular openings formed by the riser, tread and bottom element of the guardrail at the open side of a stairway may be of such size that a sphere of 6 inches in diameter cannot pass through. The top rail of the guardrail must be able to withstand a load per lineal foot of 50 pounds applied horizontally at a right angle. Intermediate rails, panel fillers and their connections shall be capable of withstanding a load of 50 pounds per square foot applied horizontally at right angles over the entire tributary area, including openings and spaces between rails.

**Window Guards:** §1405.12, 2007 CBC

Windows which are installed in exterior walls of one and two-family and multiple family dwellings of occupancy groups R-2 and R-3 whose sill portion of operable window is above 72 inches above the exterior finished grade or other surface shall:

- Have the lowest part of the clear opening of the window shall be a minimum of 24 inches above finished floor of the room it is located in.
- Glazing between finished floor and a height of 24 inches shall be fixed or have openings such that a 4 inch diameter sphere cannot pass.
- Openings between finished floor and a height of 24 inches may have guards which comply with ASTM F2006 or ASTM F2090.